arts lab

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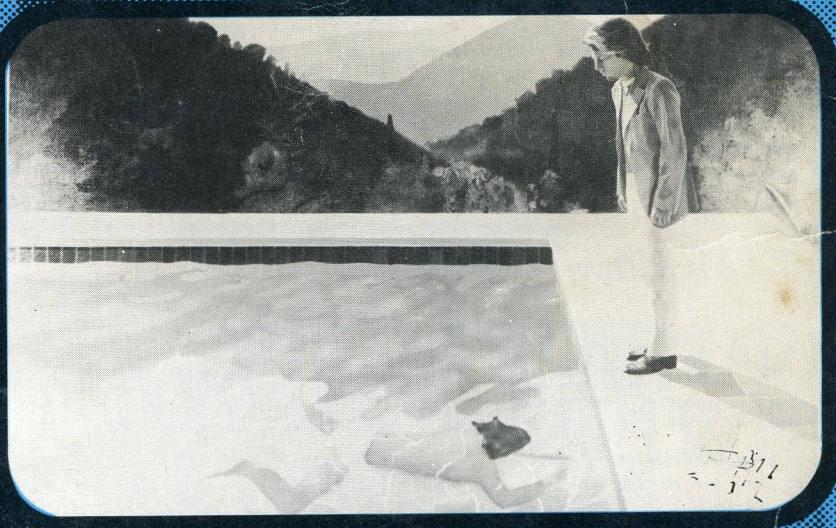
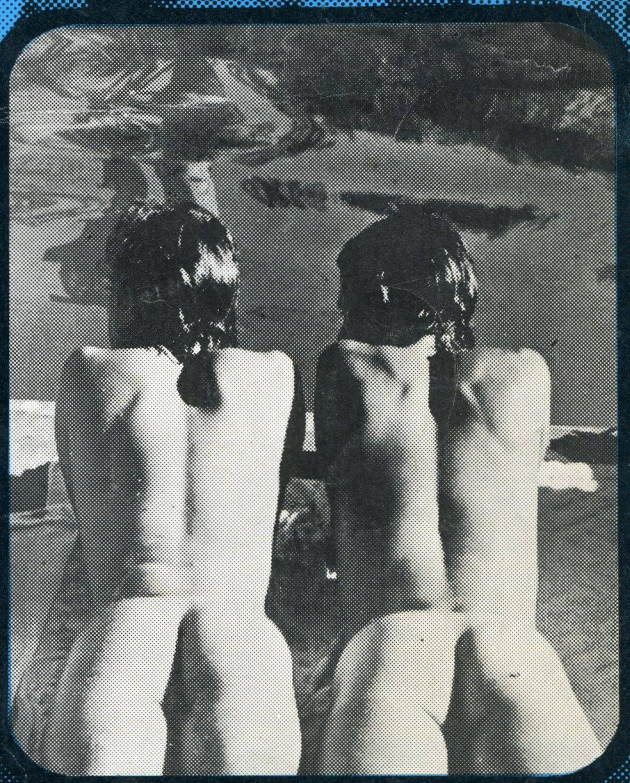




CINEMA THEATRE MUSIC POETRY DANCE EXHIBITIONS

JANUARY 19-MARCH 13

BIRMINGHAM ARTS LAB, TOWER STREET, NEWTOWN, BIRMINGHAM B19 3UY TEL: 021-359 4192

MUSIC

THE WHITE PAGODA

JANUARY 21 AT 8.00P.M.

This unusual HOME BREW features a specially commissioned piece of music 'The White Pagoda' by Rosalind Edwards. Along with her husband Michael, Rosiland plays in the jazz/rock band 'Amphioxus, whose eight musicians will be involved in performing this work, augmented by five other soloists. Although the overall structure of the piece is systematised, improvisation occurs in the form of solos with rhythm section support and this background frieze is further layered by a pre-recorded tape.

"THE WHITE PAGODA itself is a symbol of tranquillity. It appears on the skyline of a modern city but only those who hold the key can find and enter the peaceful garden where it stands."

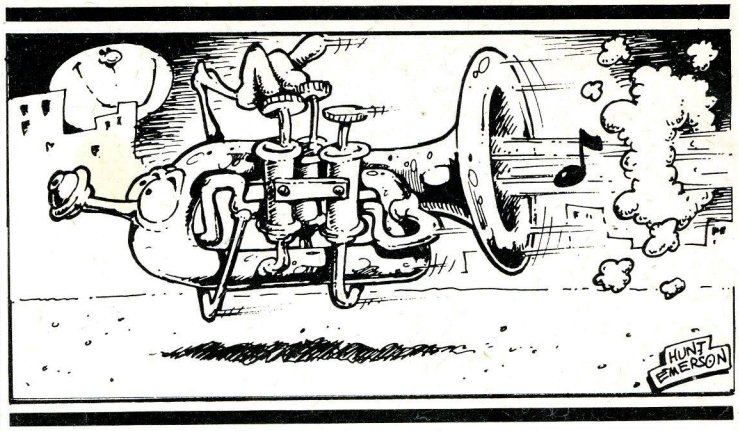
Rosalind Edwards.

The first half of the programme features three pieces from Messiaen's 'Catalogue D'Oiseaux' and the first British performance of Morton Feldman's 'Instruments'. Members are advised to book in advance.

SPONTANEOUS MUSIC ENSEMBLE

FEB 11 AT 8.00P.M.

This internationally-famous free-jazz ensemble, led by John Stevens, visits Birmingham as part of the 1976 Contemporary Music Network. The improvised material they present is of equal interest to the classical and jazz oriented avant-gardist and also to many progressive educationalists. Keep a watchful eye for further publicity - details were unavailable at the time of going to press. You are, however, advised to book early for this concert.



ARTS LAB MUSIC WORKSHOP

MARCH 10 AT 8.00P.M.

From October 1975 the Experimental Music Workshop was run as a ten-week course by the Extramural Department of the University of Birmingham and studied *musique concrete*. On the completion of this course, sufficient enthusiasm had been generated for it to continue as the Arts Lab Music Workshop and for individuals to realise their own musical compositions. Most of the work which has been completed to date has been composed on the minimum amount of equipment possible: two tape recorders! With the help of an editing block, however, some very musical results have been achieved. We are hoping to increase our hardware resources within the next few months and the workshop is open to all members of the Arts Lab.

The concert on March 10th. will comprise of works written by members of the workshop for tape, live instrumental sounds and (borrowed!) VCS3 Synthesiser.

POETRY

OPEN READINGS

JANUARY 30 AT 7.30P.M.

The two OPEN READINGS fixed for January offer the usual platform to local writers of poetry and prose (not to mention musicians). The atmosphere is informal and anyone can simply turn up and air their work. In addition, people interested in the West Midlands poetry scene meet and exchange views, information and contacts. Don't forget the Lab has a wide range of poetry publications in the bookstall, most of them from local sources.

WORKSHOP?

If there is sufficient interest, we'd like to begin a regular fortnightly Poetry Workshop in February. The idea would be to cover a whole range of topics from publishing to performing, and we'd like to use our facilities for film and tapes for some sessions. Other meetings would involve visiting poets, both locally and nationally known, but the workshop would try to keep an emphasis on the ideas and writings of its members. It's likely that the Workers Educational Association will be involved by providing some financial support.

If you'd like to be involved, drop a line to John Keetley or call him at the Lab.

BOOK LAUNCHING

A special Poetry and Music event to mark the publication of the fourth major title from the Arts Lab Press. The book features the poetry of four women: DONNA DICKENSON, LOUISE JONES, VAL LEON, and JULE WIELAND with illustrations by ALEX FAULKNER. Further details with the Film Festival mailing.

EXHIBITIONS

ARTS LAB EXHIBITIONS ARE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC EVERY DAY FROM 10 AM TO 10 PM. MANY EXHIBITS ARE FOR SALE, AS AR PRINTS IN THE LAB'S 'PERMANENT' COLLECTION. ENQUIRIES TO MICKY COTTRELL OR THE BOX-OFFICE.

JANUARY MICK FARRELL

Paintings, Prints and Drawings.

Born: Birmingham 1952. Attended Bournville College of Art for Pre-Diploma year (71-72) and then Manchester Polytechnic, Department of Fine Art (72-75). Since leaving college Mick has had prints in the 'Northern Young Contemporaries' exhibition at the Whitworth Gallery in Manchester. This is his first one-man exhibition.

FEBRUARY BOB GROVES

Born: Birmingham 1935.

Egg Tempera on Jesso, sometimes with gold leaf.

Landscapes influenced by and using photography.
Was one of the five founders of the Ikon Gallery, Birmingham.

MARCH ELLEN KUHN

Screenprints

Born: Munich 1937. Lived in U.S.A. (1939-63). Studied at Universities of Wisconsin and California. Lived in London since 1963. The exhibition will be of screenprints based on photographic images derived from movie stills. Has exhibited in various London galleries and also at the National Film Theare, London.

THEATRE

K.W. PRODUCTIONS present

THE KID

FEBRUARY 5/6/7 AT 8P.M.

With John Carter. Written and directed by Keith Wood.

On 2Ist December I880 at 'Stinking Springs' in the territory of New Mexico, Billy the Kid was arrested by Sherriff Pat Garrett and a posse of thirteen men for the killing of Sherriff Brady during the Lincoln County War of I878.

THE KID is based on this true incident in the life of Billy the Kid. Billy, surrounded on all sides, contemplates his fate, and questions his destiny.... escape is impossible, surrender unthinkable.

"When the publicity posters ape the golden movie age and say 'John Carter is The Kid' that's exactly what they mean. For an hour Mr. Carter becomes Billy: wild, contradictory, impetuous Billy, whispering and roaring, grovelling and strutting, proud as a peacock, scared as a man facing certain death, but always Billy. In a virtuoso performance Mr. Carter once again demonstrates the magnitude and range of his acting talent. But the honours are shared equally with Mr. Wood who has created and directed a beautifully structured and perfectly paced play that pulses with action, humour and humanity. It is more than simply a look at a legendary Western hero. It is a lucid, wholly refresning tribute to the complete Western phenomena that owes as much to comics, movies and myths as it does to a particular man captured at a particular point in a particularly violent life."

CHRIS STUART / WESTERN MAIL

KEITH WOOD - trained at Cardiff College of Art, subsequently lecturing in Performance art. He has worked as writer/director for all the company's productions.

JOHN CARTER - trained at Leicester College of Art and was a founder member of "Moving Being", for whom he worked as actor, and was in control of all film work for the company. He joined K.W. PRODUCTIONS to play Neal Cassidy in "The Cassidy Variations" in May I975.

JOHN CARTER AS BILLY THE KID

SECOND CITY SECONDS

MARCH 8 TO I3 AT 8.00P.M.

Two programmes of new plays devised and presented for the Arts Lab by students from Birmingham University Drama Department. Each programme will contain a number of pieces of work of various lengths, individually and collectively written, covering a variety of subjects and styles - sad, funny, tragic, outrageous and, at the time of writing, a bit unpredictable. More details of the works to be presented will be available nearer the time.

The writers of the two groups will be: AARON SHIRLEY, CHRISSIE POULTER, SYD PITCHER, LOUISE PAGE, GAYE KYNOCH, TERRY JOHNSON and DAVID EDGAR.

The two programmes of work will be presented in repartory during the week, the first on Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 8.00p.m., the second on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday at 8.00p.m.

Combined tickets for both programmes will be available from the Arts Lab at the reduced price of 75p (members) and £I (temporary members). Students will be able to purchase tickets at members' prices on production of a Union Card.

ARTS LAB & 2nd CITY THEATRE present

HOME LEAVE

by BOB STEVENS

FEBRUARY 24 TO MARCH 6 AT 8P.M.

HOME LEAVE takes its title from the name given to the system in operation in British Borstals, whereby an inmate is sent out on a fortnight's probation at the end of his sentence but before his final release. The play shows the experiences of four Borstal boys during their period of home leave; their fantasies of life outside the Borstal; the difficulties of re-establishing relationships and friendships; the ever-present awareness of being on probation; and ultimately the cruelty and inhumanity of the 'home leave' system.
HOME LEAVE is the first joint production between the Arts Lab and Second City Theatre Company. It has come about primarily because of the nature of the play which makes it suitable for both an adult and a youth audience. It has therefore been possible to combine the resources of the Lab and Second City to present this play not only at the Lab but also at several youth clubs in the city. It is hoped that it will be possible to repeat this exercise in future, in order that Second City's work may reach a wider audience and that the Arts Lab can continue to expand the production and presentation of new work.

BOB STEVENS is a local writer born and still living in Birmingham. HOME LEAVE, his first play to be produced, was presented to both the Arts Lab and Second City Theatre Companies in its very early stages some time ago. Since then the original script has undergone many changes both for artistic and practical reasons, and only reached its final form by the beginning of rehearsals. Bob Stevens is now writing full-time and we hope to be presenting more of his work in the near future.

HYENA TOUR

The Arts Lab Performance Group's performance of HYENA - 'Tis Pity She's A Whore, premiered at the Lab in December, starts a six-week national tour this month. If you didn't manage to see the show at the Lab, you'll be able to catch up with it at the following venues:

Jan 8 & 9	North Staffordshire Polytechnic
Jan 12 & 13	South Warwickshire College, Stratford-upon-Avon
Jan 14 & 15	University of Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry
Jan 20 - 24	University Theatre, Newcastle-upon-Tyne
Jan 26 - 28	Sheffield University Drama Studio
Feb 2 & 3	West Midlands College, Walsall
Feb 5 - 7	Chapter Arts Centre, Cardiff
Feb 10 - 14	I.C.A., London.

Bookings in Amsterdam and Brussels are at the moment still being negotiated. For further information on the company's work and future plans please contact Stuart Rogers or Neil Murray at the Lab.

CINEMA

This Programme puts a heavy emphasis on new films which have somehow failed to get normal commercial distribution in Birmingham. What is important, though, is not that they simply haven't been shown before, but that they are unquestionably some of the most significant films to be released in this country over the last year. And so a string of Birmingham premieres dominate our new Programme: A BIGGER SPLASH, Jack Hazan's amazing study of the world of David Hockney, is perhaps the most original British film of recent years; during 1975 contemporary German Cinema at last became recognised in this country and the three leading talents Fassbinder, Herzog & Wim Wenders are represented here; but the 'big guns' must surely arrive with the dazzling cinematic display in Antonioni's THE PASSENGER and with Robert Altman's epic musical parody, NASHVILLE.

Solaris

JANUARY 19/20

Director: Andrei Tarkovsky U.S.S.R. 1972
Script: Tarkovsky and F. Horenstein, from the novel by Stanislaw Lem. Photography: Vadim Yousov. With: Nathalie Bondarchuk, Donatas Banionis, Yuri Yarvet.
Colour/Scope. Subtitles. Certificate A.

Tarkovsky is Russia's greatest living film-maker and this fascinating science-fiction epic is his third feature. It is unfortunate, if perhaps inevitable, that the film has been labelled as "Russia's answer to 2001", for Tarkovsky's particular interest and whole approach is obviously very different to Kubrick's. SOLARIS is very impressive technically, but the beautiful visuals and inspired use of music are not mere decoration.

Tarkovsky examines the psychological and moral problems facing scientists and the broader philosophical issues raised by space travel, but it is the development of the strange love story at the centre of the film that is the main source of fascination, adding a genuinely tragic dimension to this remarkable, if slightly perplexing, film.

"Tarkovsky's film is science-fiction in the best sense... He uses the mode not to depict space or science but to explore what humanity really is by placing his protagonists in an alien environment. To my mind, he has succeeded in making a far more important film than Kubrick's 2001. The story is fairly simple but its ramifications are complex. Expeditions to the mysterious planet of Solaris have been unsuccessful. The Ocean that covers the planet appears to be an enormous living brain which creates visions in the minds of its explorers. When a psychologist is sent to Solaris to discover what is happening, he finds that one of the scientists has killed himself and the other two obsessed by their own illusions."

Ken Wlaschin/FILMS AND FILMING.

The Goalkeeper's Fear Of The Penalty

JANUARY 23 TO 28

Director: Wim Wenders West Germany/Austria 1971
Script: Wenders and Peter Handke, from Handke's novel.
Photography: Robby Muller. With: Arthur Brauss, Kai Fischer, Erika Pluhar.
Colour. Subtitles. Certificate A. 101 minutes.

'THE GOALKEEPER'S FEAR OF THE PENALTY'

"Goalkeepers, psychologically speaking at any rate, have always seemed to me to be the most interesting characters on the football field. But it is still a little surprising that Wim Wenders, the young German director of ALICE IN THE CITIES, has made one the subject of his splendidly titled study of contemporary alienation. The effect is remarkable. Not only does the sporting metaphor work very well but it somehow pulls what would otherwise be a rather taxing existentialist argument into brighter, more immediate focus. One hastens to add, though, that the film is actually not about football at all. Joseph Bloch, its protagonist, just happens to be a veteran goalie who lets a goal through without moving a muscle and then walks disgustedly and hopelessly off the pitch. More relevantly, he is a man at the end of his tether, stumbling about within a society bent on atrophying his responses.

"Even Bloch's best efforts to break out of his state of indifference founder. After leaving the field of play, he meets up with a cinema cashier, goes to bed with her in a hotel and, after breakfast next morning, calmly strangles her. Then he goes off to visit a former girlfriend who runs an inn in the country, ostensibly to hide, more probably to test his capacity to make contact again. But neither move provides him with the catharsis he needs. The police can't find him, and the girl doesn't want him. His emotional stasis is rendered complete.

"What Wenders has done is to elaborate, through his method of film-making, the goalkeeper's fractured state of mind. Bloch's detachment is directly reflected by the director's own. The film's style is unemphatic and unemotional. The camera, very seldom moved, stares not just at its characters or its settings but at the sort of objects Bloch blinks at - jukeboxes, a heap of rotting melons, the ugly familiarity of everyday life. There are no dramatic moments since a lack of drama is what the film is about."

DEREK MALCOLM / GUARDIAN.

"On top of everything else, THE GOALKEEPER'S FEAR OF THE PENALTY works exemplarily as an account of a man who commits a crime, flees, and then watches the police steadily catch up with him. On this level, it savours moments of almost existential uncertainty, like the one a goalkeeper faces when a penalty is awarded against him, and acknowledges visually its debts to such forbears as Hitchcock while it's about it."

TONY RAYNS / M.F.B. 12/75

A Private Enterprise

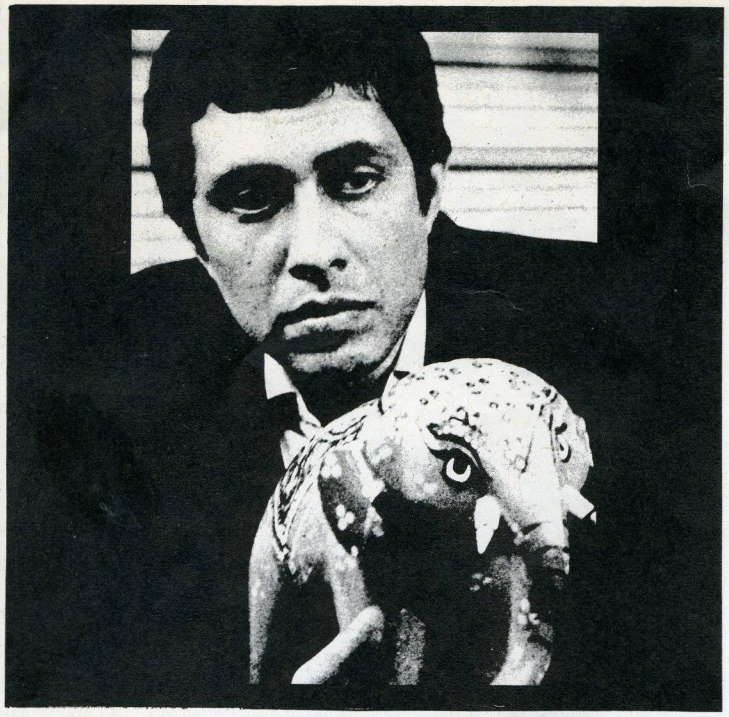
JANUARY 23 TO 28

Director: Peter Smith Great Britain 1974
Script: Peter Smith and Dilip Hiro. Photography: Ray Orton. Music: Ram Narayan. With: Salmaan Peer, Marc Zuber, Ramon Sinha, Shukla Bhattercharjee.
Colour. Certificate AA. 78 minutes.

A second chance to see Peter Smith's highly-praised film which made an all too brief appearance at a Birmingham commercial cinema.

"Opening the same week as AKENFIELD, currently being held up as an achievement of independent endeavour and limited budget, the more modest and successful ENTERPRISE is in danger of being overlooked. The film tells of a young Indian's journey from Birningham to London down the road of compromise, a movement counterpointed by his friend's increasing politicisation at the local factory. Smith, with very little of the roughness that you'd expect from a first feature made with such limited resources, reveals a keen eye for the familiar yet alien Victorian terraces and factories of the Indian community, while the script refuses to indulge the easy option of making statements about the immigration probelm. What resolutely distinguishes this film from AKENFIELD is that Peter Hall's film record so far reveals little more than a man with an expensive hobby, whereas Peter Smith's achievement indicates a talent that should be allowed to develop."

TIME OUT.



SALMAAN PEER IN 'A PRIVATE ENTERPRISE'

PLUS

Last Grave At Dimbaza

Director: Anonymous Great Britain I974
Colour. Certificate A. 54 minutes.

Out of the I5O films included in the Third International Short Film Festival at Grenoble, the 53-minute LAST GRAVE AT DIMBAZA gained both the Critics' Prize and the jury award for the Best Engaged Film. Shot illegally in South Africa and using cameras smuggled into areas in which they were forbidden, this deeply moving and powerful film depicts the situation of the black population, particularly those being forcibly moved to the new "native" areas.

A Bigger Splash

JANUARY 28 TO FEBRUARY 7

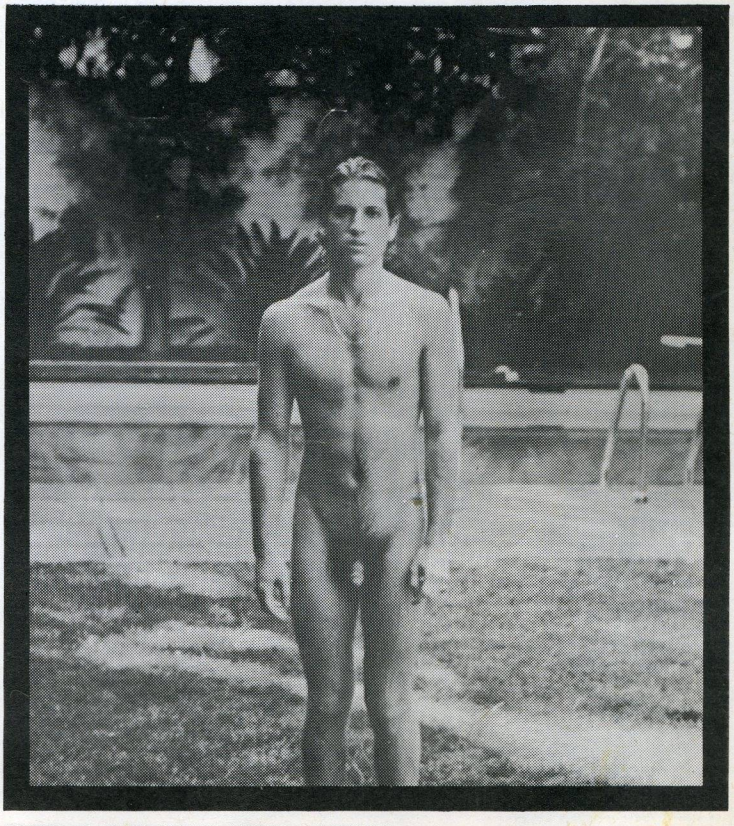
Director: Jack Hazan. Great Britain 1974.
Script: Hazan & David Mingay. Photography: Hazan.
With: David Hockney, Peter Schlesinger, Celia Birtwell, Mo McDermott, Ossie Clark.
Cert. X. Colour. 1O5 mins.

"Films about artists tend to fall into two equally dispiriting categories: the sober, conscientious TV-style documentary, and the wild and woolly romantic bio-pic à la Hollywood. The first type of film gives us all the accredited facts about an artist without actually bringing him to life; the second brings him to life but without giving us any - or precious few - of the accredited facts. It seems impossible for a film to portray an artist as a believable, complex and spontaneous human being and to define and analyse the peculiar gifts that mark him off from other mortals.
"Jack Hazan's A BIGGER SPLASH is a notable exception: not so much because its feature-length portrait of the painter David Hockney manages to embrace both categories as because it creates a new category entirely of its own. It is the first full-length film to be made by its 35-year old director, who has previously worked in television, and it arrives after scoring successes at several of last year's major film festivals. Hazan's method was to film Hockney's life and work *in situ*. He spent some three years following and recording the ups and downs of Hockney's career and personal relationships, and he then pulled the disparate film material into shape with the aid of a loosely chronological script by himself and editor/collaborator David Mingay.
"The result is like no film you have seen before: not quite a documentary, not quite a fiction film, not quite a combination of the two. Hazan's fly-on-the-wall approach creates an extraordinary sense of intimacy with his subject, but at the same time there's a remote, formal, dream-like quality about the film which seems so often to mirror Hockney's own style as a painter. There is no film - not even the much-praised PIROSMANI - which sets up so many intriguing vibrations between an artist's life and his work; the moods, the rhythms, the motifs, the obsessions that link the two worlds together.
"The film's story, told in flashback, could hardly be simpler. Hockney has fallen out with his former lover Peter Schlesinger, a fellow painter, and now divides his time between casual visits to friends, erratic bouts of work, and vague plans to visit New York. Kasmin, the London gallery owner, nags him to produce more paintings and Mo, a homosexual friend and former model of Hockney's, fusses about offering help and good advice. Other luminaries of the swinging sixties spin in and out of the film's orbit - fashion designer Ossie Clark, model Celia Birtwell, painter Patrick Procktor. Finally, Hockney goes to New York: he disappears: urgent phone calls back in England: he reappears: and the story comes full-circle to its pre-flashback beginning in a flat in Geneva in June 1973.
"The film's moments of drama spring not from any climactic turning points in the characters' lives, but from a series of beautifully-staged 'confrontations' between the world of art and the world of reality. ..... It is as if we see the whole world of the film through those quizzical, owl-rimmed spectacles that have become the painter's own trade-mark.
"No less remarkable is the attitude of easy unhypocritical acceptance the film has towards the homosexual milieu in which it is set. The film's one male love scene is so tenderly and unaggressively staged that it is hard to imagine anyone finding it offensive: while everywhere the ups and downs of personal relationships between men are documented as simply thoroughly as they would be in a film about men and women. "When love goes wrong, there's more than two people suffer," intones a lugubrious Mo at one point; and as much as a portrait of Hockney the film is a study of the emotional ripples that spread out through a whole related group of people when one of them receives a personal blow or disappointment.
"Not only is it one of the best films about an artist that I have seen, but it also offers a timely corrective to those who think the British cinema is bereft of talent. The talent is there all right: what is all too often lacking is the encouragement."

NIGEL ANDREWS / FINANCIAL TIMES

"A BIGGER SPLASH is a unique document and an astonishing first feature. Even allowing for the conscious and controlled values of the film - the often breathtaking rightness of the image, the subtle juxtapositions, the perceptions of the camera-observer, the cool sensitivity of the handling of homosexual love - it is an effort which, depending as it does on a particular chance combination of personalities and circumstance, the film-makers are not likely to repeat. The fact remains, though, that Hazan and Mingay proved equal to what chance offered."

DAVID ROBINSON / FILM COMMENT.



PETER SCHLESINGER POSES PROUDLY

The Enigma Of Kaspar Hauser

FEBRUARY
8 TO 14

Director: Werner Herzog West Germany 1974
Script: Herzog. Photography: Jorg Schmidt-Reitwein and Klaus Wyborny (Dream sequences). With: Bruno S., Walter Ladengast, Brigitte Mira, Willy Semmelroggs.
Colour. Subtitles. Certificate A. 110 minutes.

Special Jury Award/FIPRESCI Prize: Cannes International Festival 1975.

"Fresh from the London Festival, Werner Herzog's THE ENIGMA OF KASPAR HAUSER arrives with a fully deserved reputation as one of the most remarkable European films of the year. Its story alone is totally extraordinary, based as it is on a truth that tames most fiction. Kaspar Hauser appeared on the streets of Nuremberg in 1828 having apparently spent his entire 17 years of life shackled in a dark cellar and fed on bread, water and meat by an unseen gaoler. He could neither walk properly nor speak. But he could say to the startled burghers who found him, "I would like to be the kind of horseman my father was", having learnt the sentence parrot-fashion from the man who freed him, without knowing what it meant. He was given shelter, instruction and later shown off as a pet and freak. Years afterwards he was found inexplicably murdered. Legends grew around him. He was the natural son of the Grand Duke of Baden, perhaps even of Napoleon. But nothing was ever latched to fact.
"Herzog has set his film in the small town of Dinkelsbuhl in Franconia where the pervading sense of order and neatness contrasts with a wild and vaguely ominous surrounding countryside. And his Kaspar is played with an almost other-worldly intuition and simplicity by 43-year old Bruno S., who was himself incarcerated from the age of three until past twenty in asylums, borstals and prisons. At first sight, the quiet and concentrated pattern of the film seems much like that of Truffaut's fine L'ENFANT SAUVAGE. But its purposes are very different and its power over the imagination even stronger.
"If Truffaut lets us identify with those who confront the child, we are asked by Herzog to see the world as Kaspar experiences it. ... Herzog asks questions that Truffaut barely hinted at about salvation through the educative, civilising process, and certainly comes to more brutally pessimistic conclusions. How is it possible for a totally 'natural' and spontaneous being not to be fatally upended by contact with our false certainties? And how can we rediscover the natural state if we refuse to question the basic assumptions of our logic? What indeed is logic itself the way that society defines and circumscribes it now?
"After the murder, a post-mortem is performed on Kaspar's body and certain deformities are found. The oddness, everybody is relieved to find, was in him, not them. They can breathe again, their guilt conveniently exorcised. And guilt is very definitely what the film is about - the guilt of all of us in relation to all the world's Kaspars and Brunos. It is the story of a quiet and gentle soul suspended in the limbo of a noisy world's making. It is also the story of what we have done to ourselves in the name of progress. "Don't you hear the horrible scream around us that is commonly called silence?", says Kaspar. Herzog's achievement, through all his film's occasional hesitancies and ingenuousness, is that we do indeed begin to hear it. He has shown us before that his art is capable of that extra dimension that sticks, sometimes inconveniently, in the memory. With KASPAR HAUSER he has become one of the cinema's few poets and visionaries.

DEREK MALCOLM / GUARDIAN.

"The problem is quite different from that of the wild boy in Truffaut's L'ENFANT SAUVAGE. There, the victim is a young human animal who can be tamed and taught. Kaspar Hauser is a complete being. He can learn some of the externals of the life around him. But he has his own interior life. ... He has dreams and visions; in his abstracted mind a caravan led by a blind man crosses the Sahara; a line of shadowy figures climb a mountain towards Death. Silently, in the depths of his solitude, he weeps. For this, it seems to me, is the point of Herzog's extraordinary film: the situation of a man exiled, as it were, from his own world and isolated in a world which has no comprehension of his half-remembered spiritual inheritance."

DILYS POWELL / SUNDAY TIMES.

"Herzog shows Kaspar's existence as a kind of trance, bounded at either end by darkness: he is not a child to be instructed, but a being from somewhere else, disquieting and unassimilable. ... As with his AGUIRRE, the film seems designed to expand in the mind."

PENELOPE HOUSTON / SIGHT & SOUND.

BRUNO S. PLAYS 'KASPAR HAUSER'

The Passenger

FEBRUARY 15 TO 21

Director: Michelangelo Antonioni. Italy/France/Spain 1975.
Script: Mark Peploe, Peter Wollen, Antonioni. Photography: Luciano Tovoli. With: Jack Nicholson, Maria Schneider, Jenny Runacre, Ian Hendry.
Colour. English dialogue. Certificate A. 119 minutes.

'Film of the Year (1974/75)' - INTERNATIONAL FILM GUIDE

"THE PASSENGER demands the cheers and.... re-establishes Antonioni in Europe and as the master of landscape. The landscape, of course, of our time: this story of an attempt to change an identity is as indefinably but unmistakably a film for the 1970's as BLOW UP was almost too definably a film for the 1960's. Its key settings - the desert and Spain - are classically fatalistic: empty spaces waiting for death. But the film is also about the indifferent, continuing process of life."

PENELOPE HOUSTON / SIGHT & SOUND.

"Antonioni's film is a haunting and intriguing mystery that shapes itself as an elusive chase describing a crisis of conscience, a moral burnt-outness that attempts to reclaim itself, a psychic disintegration that ends in impasse. Jack Nicholson gives his most persuasive performance to date as Locke, the uncommitted television journalist who chooses to assume a dead man's identity. The film is visually meticulous.

VERINA GLAESSNER / TIME OUT.

"In a crumbling African village, David Locke asks for directions in faltering phrases ("Vous parlons francais?") while the camera repeatedly pans away from him; in the desert, stranded in the sand with his land-rover, he sobs "I don't care" while he is abandoned again by an indifferent camera drifting over empty dunes. Seemingly uncomposed in terms of framing, dialogue or discernible narrative direction, the beginning of THE PASSENGER charts the confusion of an identity going to pieces. The remainder of the film carries him from a new life as Robertson to an oddly fulfilling death in the same guise, when the camera once again turns away from him, this time to discover a richer (if no more legible) counterpart to his personality. His wife and producer are meanwhile left to collect and create a coherent vision of his earlier self: "If you try hard enough, you can re-invent him", someone remarks to Rachel, and her efforts run parallel to Locke's re-invention of Robertson. Near the end of the film's penultimate seven-minute shot - a camera movement defining the hero's nemesis and apotheosis as it proceeds out of his window and around the square, accumulating all the diverse threads of his destiny in a choreography of passing figures - after the

JACK NICHOLSON & MARIA SCHNEIDER IN 'THE PASSENGER'

camera has gradually swung around to find him dead, a Spanish official asks Rachel and then the girl, "Do you recognise him?". "I never knew him", Rachel replies, while the girl says, "Yes"; both answers implicitly fuse the identities of Locke and Robertson, for both women could be speaking about either one of them.
"Working with a conception that is perhaps even more literary than the art-and-illusion conceit framing BLOW UP - with echoes of everything from Conrad's 'inscrutable' Africa to any number of Borges tales - Antonioni moulds a specifically filmic intrigue by periodically disrupting the linear flow that his putative thriller plot suggests, thrusting the spectator into a mosaic of uncertainties increased by steady displacements in space and time. ... Continually redirecting our attention, THE PASSENGER fragments and diverts its story to the point where it becomes even more cryptic once all its basic components and possibilities (both literal and symbolic) are reassembled in the climactic shot, where - along with the hero and the Third World struggle he ambiguously relates to - it becomes an abstract generalisation about identity rather than a concrete realisation of its taking shape."

JONATHAN ROSENBAUM / MONTHLY FILM BULLETIN

Nashville

FEBRUARY 22 TO 28

Director: Robert Altman. Script: Joan Tewkesbury. Photography: Paul Lohmann. With: David Arkin, Barbara Baxley, Ned Beatty, Karen Black, Ronee Blakley, Timothy Brown, Keith Carradine, Geraldine Chaplin, Robert Duquoi, Shelley Duvall, Allen Garfield, Henry Gibson, Scott Glenn, Jeff Goldblum, Barbara Harris, David Hayward, Michael Murphy, Allan Nicholls, Dave Peel, Christina Raines, Bert Remsen, Lily Tomlin, Gwen Welles, Keenan Wynn.
U.S.A. 1975. Cert. AA. Colour. 161 mins.

"Altman has chosen Nashville rather than Hollywood as his crucible for American dreams and aspirations. His film cross-threads the stories of twenty-four people in the Country & Western capital of the States and creates an epic comedy that could well serve as a cinematic national anthem.
"All these stories cross and touch the way they would in real life, with barely any dramatic artifice making itself felt. Yet, in terms of movie organisation, this naturalness and simplicity is masterly. Altman edited the current version from virtually twelve hours of film, yet it seems so complex a tapestry that it defies simple verbal description. From the innovatory sound overlap techniques of M*A*S*H and CALIFORNIA SPLIT, Altman has now produced a film that is itself self-overlapping, made with an art that conceals art."

DAVID CASTELL / FILMS ILLUSTRATED.

"Robert Altman has finally put it all together. The result is NASHVILLE, 2 hours and 40 minutes crammed with life, music, wit and irony - all flavoured with a soupcon of politics. The film has received such unanimously positive reviews and such heavy subsidiary publicity that one's natural reaction is, "well, it cant be that good!", but it is, if not necessarily for the reasons most critics have cited. It doesn't have all that much to say about American politics - in fact what it does communicate politically is mainly a sense of confusion. It isn't a 'radical evolutionary leap' in the language of cinema, although it does, I suppose, go rather far in ignoring heavy plot lines for such a commercial endeavour. What NASHVILLE does do superbly... is present us with a collection of sounds and images that leave us with a real cinematic emotional high. Maybe that's why most critics have seemed so befuddled trying to explain why it's such an effective piece of cinema: drunk with its power, they can't quite summon the necessary objectivity.
"What Altman has done, simply, is construct a film with extraordinary density: every image has two uses, every shot communicates by its style as well as its content; the soundtrack, as we might expect from Altman, is particularly dense. The improvisational style of performance, the nearly continuous presence of music, the highly-orchestrated background 'noise' combine to make rare full use of the often-ignored sound dimension of film.
"Altman trains his cameras and microphones on 24 major characters (and a couple of dozen minor ones) whose interlocking stories - a string of anecdotes, really - are told almost as an afterthought. What really counts is the atmosphere of "Music City, U.S.A." - Nashville, Tennessee."

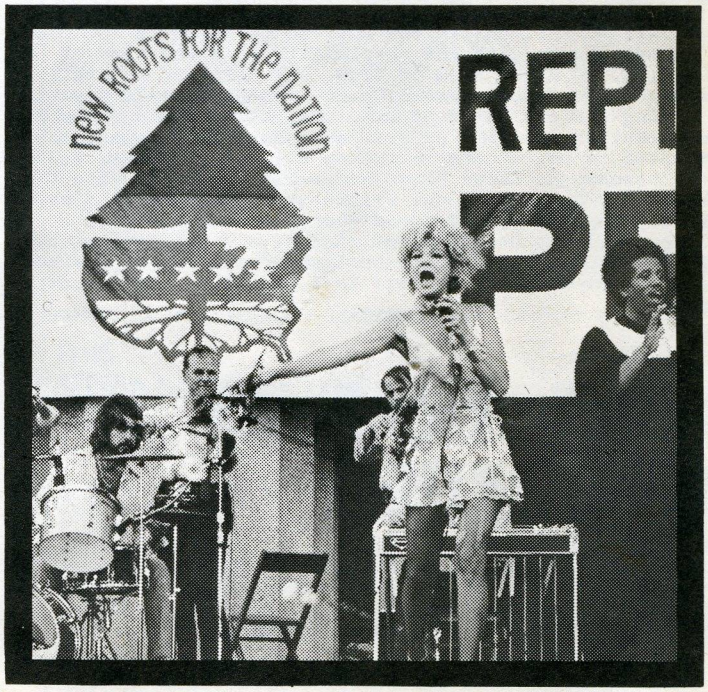
JAMES MONACO / FILM.

".... If NASHVILLE is conceivably the most exciting commercial American movie in years, this is first of all because of what it constructs, not what it exposes.
"From the moment we begin with an ad for the film itself - a blaring overload of multi-media confusion - and pass to a political campaign van spouting banalities, then to a recording studio where country music star Haven Hamilton (Henry Gibson) is cutting a hilariously glib Bicentennial album, NASHVILLE registers as a double-fisted satire of its chosen terrain, and it would be wrong to suggest that its targets of derision are beside the point, even if the angle of vision subsequently widens to take in more than just foolishness. But a rich 'dialectic collage' of contradictory attitudes and diverse realities is what brings the film vibrantly to life, and to launch moralistic rockets on such a shifting base is to miss its achievement entirely. In point of fact, the film celebrates as much as it ridicules - often doing both at the same time - while giving both its brilliant cast and its audience too much elbow-room to allow for any overriding thesis."

JONATHAN ROSENBAUM / SIGHT & SOUND.

"NASHVILLE is about personal ego needs. Nearly everyone shown at any length is seen wanting to make it - either politically, musically, sexually, or via more oblique fantasies. ... Finally it's less about American society than the fantasy life of individual Americans."

DAVE PIRIE / TIME OUT.



BARBARA HARRIS TAKES THE 'NASHVILLE' STAGE

ROBERT ALTMAN

After the consummate achievement of NASHVILLE, and the consequent elevation in status of its director by way of its overwhelming popular/critical success, it would be tempting to view Altman's earlier works as mere exercises in stylistic experimentation; notes in the margin of his 'magnum opus'. This, however, would be to deny the extraordinary significance of a body of excellent films to the development of contemporary American cinema. The Arts Lab has never been slow to expose Altman's work in Birmingham, and we make no apologies for re-screening two of his more intriguing features in this programme. With a significant body of available literature on Altman now in circulation, this is not the place to examine in detail his working methods, his style, his innovations or his thematic preoccupations, but it will here suffice to point out a few fruitful directions by which to approach the films.

An instantly-recognisable feature of most of Altman's films is the way in which they simultaneously work within the confines of accepted cinema genres whilst usurping or destroying their conventional concerns. Both THE LONG GOODBYE and McCABE AND MRS MILLER feed off a long movie tradition, casually violate that tradition, and finally redefine it in terms of contemporary relevance.

Equally noticeable from even the most cursory acquaintance with Altman's films is the way in which the visual style and the soundtrack are constantly creating the impression of a fully-rounded 'chorus' at the edge of the frame or on the edge of one's hearing. These devices combine with the improvisatory evolution of most scenes to create a sense of community, a key concept in Altman's universe if always a concept he is ready to expose as an illusion. In THE LONG GOODBYE, Marlowe's illusion of community is the faith he holds in Terry Lennox; in McCABE AND MRS MILLER the community is founded on the quicksand of McCabe's inflated reputation and Mrs Miller's opium-supported realism; in NASHVILLE the community is that of isolated individuals in momentary orbital proximity, the community that takes "It Don't Bother Me' as its anthem. Other routes into Altman's essentially unified vision may be charted through his brilliantly light comic touch, his excellent use of actors and his bustling style. NASHVILLE may be the masterpiece, but the preceding films are much more than a mere craftsman's work.

PAUL TAYLOR.

The Long Goodbye

FEBRUARY 29

Director: Robert Altman. U.S.A. 1973
Script: Leigh Brackett; based on the novel by Raymond Chandler. Photography: Vilmos Zsigmond. Music: John T. Williams. With: Elliott Gould, Nina van Pallandt, Sterling Hayden, Henry Gibson, Mark Rydell, David Arkin.
Cert. X. Colour. 'Scope. 111 mins.

"THE LONG GOODBYE meanders through the glittering basin of Los Angeles, the classic non-community of major American cities. Yet, unlike the Houston of BREWSTER McCLOUD, it tantalizes us with the possibility of a new kind of community. By night from on high, its blinking constellation of colours can seem like an enchanted realm capable of making the old lures of sun, wealth, ease and stardom come true. As the film progresses, characters apparently unrelated to one another - pretty boy Terry Lennox; bellowing blocked novelist Roger Wade; his queen-bee wife Eileen; Marty Augustine, the slick-agent show-biz thug masterfully updated from Raymond Chandler's slimy 'hard boys'; Dr. Verringer, a steely blond runt of a psychiatric quack; even the cops - turn out to be linked, while goofy, dazed gumshoe Marlowe tries in vain to fathom their malignant menace."

MICHAEL DEMPSEY / FILM COMMENT.

McCabe And Mrs. Miller

MARCH 12/13

Director: Robert Altman. U.S.A. 1971
Script: Robert Altman & Brian McKay; based on the novel *McCabe* by Edmund Naughton. Photography: Vilmos Zsigmond
With: Warren Beatty, Julie Christie, Rene Auberjonois, Hugh Millais, Shelley Duvall, Keith Carradine.
Cert. X. Colour. 121 mins.

"(Altman's) best films are hybrids, products of a fusion of 'European' aspirations with American genres. ... The sophisticated visual style of McCABE AND MRS. MILLER repeatedly invites comparison with painting (the Degas-like scene of the whores' bath, for instance), and the use of Leonard Cohen's songs, more as counterpoint than accompaniment, has a complexity and sophistication beyond what one is accustomed to in Western scores, but the film has its place in the mainstream of the development of the genre: it offers particularly suggestive points of comparison with MY DARLING CLEMENTINE, the opportunistic entrepreneur McCabe replacing the ideologically committed Earp, Mrs Miller replacing Clementine as the 'girl from the East', the whorehouse replacing the church as the centre of the growing community, the melancholy shoot-out in the snow replacing the gunfight at the OK Corral."

ROBIN WOOD / MOVIE.

MARTIN SCORSESE

Of the major young talents of the 'new' Hollywood, certainly the most neglected in this country is Martin Scorsese. The distribution system hasn't helped him: MEAN STREETS disappeared after a brief run in London, leaving only the A.I.P. exploiter BOXCAR BERTHA, which just failed to transcend its pedigree, as evidence of Scorsese's potential. However, ALICE was guaranteed a release on the strength of its popular/financial success in the States, and an Edinburgh Film Festival retrospective has added vigour to demands for a chance to see the films which preceded it. Scorsese has been confirmed as a director capable of holding a wide audience whilst engaging in stylistic adventures - or risks - that leave his peers (Corman and, to a greater extent, Cassavetes) some way behind. His flirtations with improvisation have led to a certain lack of coherence in narrative construction, but his films breathe on forceful characterisation and a feel for action that echoes his restless camera style. That ALICE avoids all hints of the sentimentality inherent in its story is in itself a tribute to Scorsese, whose work we hope to feature again in 1976.

Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore

FEBRUARY 29 TO MARCH 6

Director: Martin Scorsese U.S.A. 1974
Script: Robert Getchell. Photography: Kent L. Wakeford.
With: Ellen Burstyn, Kris Kristofferson, Diane Ladd, Alfred Lutter, Billy Green Bush.
Colour. Certificate AA. 112 minutes.

"Scorsese's and Burstyn's Alice constantly and vitally explodes the narrow stereotypes to which she is called

ELLEN BURSTYN AS ALICE

on to conform (as she finds herself on the road with her son and nothing except a less than all-conquering pre-marriage career as a singer) in a film characterised by an enormous generosity; it dazzles with its astounding sense of atmosphere, precision of observation and raunchy sense of reality."

VERINA GLAESSNER / TIME OUT.

"ALICE DOESN'T LIVE HERE ANYMORE is a lesser film than MEAN STREETS, an engaging, inconsistent movie with some stunning scenes and some that don't work at all, but the director's feverish personality and style are unmistakable. They transform what might have been a feeble exercise in liberal conscientiousness into a fitfully exciting (and perhaps controversial) movie.

"At first glance, ALICE would seem to be an entirely new direction. Set in the unfamiliar territory of the Southwest, it's a feminist-era, new-style 'woman's picture' and star vehicle (Ellen Burstyn) about a thirty-five-year old woman's search for a new life - on the road, singing, waiting on table, taking care of her twelve-year-old son - after her husband dies in an accident.

"As it turns out, one of the fascinations of ALICE is the conflict between material that is very much in the Susskind mould of liberal, up-beat family drama and Scorsese's frenetic, life-is-a-battle sensibility; in other words, between 'dignity' and one possible kind of authenticity."

DAVID DENBY / TAKE ONE.

Fox

MARCH 7 TO 13

Director: Rainer Werner Fassbinder West Germany 1975
Script: Fassbinder and Christian Hohoff. Photography: Michael Ballhaus. With: Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Peter Chatel, Karlheinz Bohm, Harry Baer, Ulla Jacobsson. Colour. Subtitles. Certificate X. 123 minutes.

"FOX seems to me one of the best of this prolific young West German film-maker's social melodramas, less heavily stylised than either FEAR EATS THE SOUL or THE BITTER TEARS OF PETRA VON KANT but certainly as controversial since it is frankly set in a homosexual milieu. But the film is not really about homosexuals at all. Its theme is as anti-bourgeois as the vastly different KASPAR HAUSER. It concerns the exploitation of the unsophisticated by the sophisticated, the betrayal of innocence by simple greed.

"Fox (played by Fassbinder himself in an unemphatic but precise manner which manages to avoid the considerable pitfalls of such a part) is a tough little prole, the boyfriend of a fairground showman in whose booth he appears as Fox, the Talking Head. When the showman is gaoled, he takes up with a rich businessman (Peter Chatel) who is the heir to a foundering printing works. More importantly, he wins a lottery and for the first time in life has money.

"For the businessman he might otherwise have become just a rather troublesome piece of rough trade whose appetites in bed are almost as embarrassing as his manners at table. Now he is his financial saviour. The lottery goes to shore up the failing concern and the businessman hopefully sets out to teach Fox how to behave in his new environment.

"But even the injection of the lottery money is to no avail and the loser is Fox, the man who had most to give and accordingly has most to lose. The businessman forsakes him, only half aware that Fox's survival will be infinitely more difficult than his own.

"What gives the film its force is something more than its detailed and accurate-looking observation of character and an unfamiliar world, though that is often exceptional from a director usually concerned with less naturalistic subtleties.

"Its main power comes from its sense of the tragedy's inevitability. The feeling of impending doom that pervades an otherwise very sly and funny film isn't so much created by any black and white confrontation of personal good and evil, but by Fassbinder's insistence that the way society is divided makes predators of all those on the lucky side. 'I pay for everything. I always have done, and I always will do,' says Fox at the end. Even the film's heavily underscored final sequence can't carry more weight than those simple lines.

"Elsewhere FOX has much to commend it not only as a pessimistic tract for the times but as a more personal documentation of some of the problems of being gay. 'He's cultured, he's beautiful, he cares for me,' insists Fox to his friends in the cafe where he returns to find his bearings. 'Why didn't you tell us you're in trouble?' sums up the barman. FOX is full of small surprises that stick in the mind. It is perhaps made more notable bacause it isn't about heterosexuals. But, in fact, it balefully concerns us all."

Derek Malcolm/THE GUARDIAN.

ACTOR/DIRECTOR FASSBINDER IN 'FOX'

BLOOD OF A POET

MARCH 3

Directed by Jean Cocteau. France 1930.

A 52-minute slice of cinematic poetry; a revel in the excesses of borrowed surrealist imagery; a glimpse into the fantasies of the original 'enfant terrible'.

PLUS

UN CHANT D'AMOUR

Director: Jean Genet France 1950
Script: Jean Genet. Photography: Jacques Natteau. Black and white. 25 minutes.

Jean Genet's only film is now available in a new print with a music score by Gavin Bryars.

"The film is more closely related to Genet's novels (especially 'Miracle of the Rose') and plays (especially 'Deathwatch') than to the long poem which bears the same title. Its locus is the prison wing housing convicted murderers in solitary confinement; the action occurs in the individual cells, and in the minds of the prisoners and of the guard who, like the audience, spies on them...

"Perhaps most striking is Genet's customary spirituality, and his assumption (in common with L'AGE D'OR) that the deepest passions thrive only in the most deprived physical conditions. These qualities are the more remarkable in that the film is among the most intensely *physical* ever made, consisting largely of close-ups - faces, shoulders, crotches, phalluses, soiled clothing - all lent an almost Pauline purity by their isolation and the film's silence. Comparable in achievement to certain films of Dreyer and Bresson, Genet's short film is at least their equal."

Tony Rayns/MONTHLY FILM BULLETIN.

PLUS

STRANGE COMPANY

Directed by Eric Wallace. Great Britain 1973.
Featuring: Lindsay Kemp and Orlando.

STRANGE COMPANY is a 30-minute documentary on Lindsay Kemp and his troupe, shot on location in Carlisle and Edinburgh. Eric Wallace's film has been somewhat eclipsed by the slightly earlier film LINDSAY KEMP CIRCUS. It is, nevertheless, a refreshing look at the way Lindsay works and the important role of Jack 'Orlando' Burkett. It should be an interesting appetiser to Mr. Wallace's new film I CAN LICK ANY GIRL IN THE HOUSE, which is a fantasy/documentary (for want of a more apt label) featuring the European women's wrestling champion, Mitzi Mueller.

LATE SHOWS

Smiles Of A Summer Night

JANUARY 23 TO 25

Director: Ingmar Bergman Sweden I955
Script: Bergman. Photography: Gunnar Fischer. With: Eva Dahlbeck, Ulla Jacobsson, Harriet Andersson.
Black and white. Subtitles. Certificate X. IO4 minutes.

SMILES OF A SUMMER NIGHT, which is one of Bergman's greatest films, has just been re-released in this country, with new 35mm prints now available once again. Much influenced by Mozart opera, it will be particularly interesting to compare with the director's latest, THE MAGIC FLUTE.

SMILES OF A SUMMER NIGHT was one of the first films to establish Bergman's reputation in Great Britain. One might be tempted to regard it, ignorantly, as an early work, and to try to see his subsequent films as growing out of it. Of course it is no such thing; and now that so much more of Bergman's earlier work has become accessible, one can see that SMILES is less a beginning than an end: it has something of the nature of a combined culmination and retrospect, its achieved perfection associating with its consolidating rather than exploratory character..."

"The eight main characters resolve themselves in the course of the film, with what is felt as a perfect appropriatness, into four couples: Egerman and his mistress (Dahlbeck); Henrik (Bjorn Bjelvenstam) and his father's young second wife (Ulla Jacobsson); Count Malcolm (Jarl Kulle) and his own wife (the remarkable Margit Carlquist - sadly, almost her only appearance in a Bergman film); the maid Petra (Harriet Andersson) and the coachman Frid (Ake Fridell). None is exempt from the pervasive irony; on the other hand, none is treated without sympathy. Count Malcolm gets rather less than anyone else: he anticipates Don Juan in THE DEVIL'S EYE (played by the same actor), except that he is a Don Juan who hasn't yet recognized his own emptiness. The complex interaction of the characters in the course of the intrigue makes the film a continually shifting kaleidoscope in which different relationships and attitudes to love become juxtaposed, to be compared and evaluated..."

"With its own individual and complex flavour, the astringency balanced and modified by qualities of warmth, tenderness and charm, SMILES OF A SUMMER NIGHT remains one of Bergman's perfect films."

Robin Wood/INGMAR BERGMAN.

PLUS

Wild Strawberries

Director: Ingmar Bergman Sweden I957
Script: Bergman. Photography: Gunnar Fischer. With: Victor Sjostrom, Bibi Andersson, Ingrid Thulin, Gunnar Bjornstrand, Folke Sundquist, Max von Sydow.
Black and white. Subtitles. Certificate A. 95 minutes.

"An old professor of medicine, on the morning when he is to receive an honorary degree, dreams of his own coffin and his own dead body; during the journey to the university his past is revived in chance meetings, in memories and visions which reveal him to himself as well as to us. The film is full of acute psychological observation, and there is a superb performance by Victor Sjostrom as the stubborn old man imprisoned in his glacial shell."

Dilys Powell.

S-P-Y-S

FEBRUARY I3 TO I5

Director: Irvin Kershner Great Britain I974
Script: Malcolm Marmorstein, Lawrence J. Cohen, Fred Freeman. Photography: Gerry Fisher. With: Elliot Gould, Donald Sutherland, Zouzou, Joss Ackland, Kenneth Griffith.
Colour. Certificate A. IOO minutes.

Irvin Kershner's remarkable fifties movie THE HOODLUM PRIEST was shown at the Lab last summer and LOVING, a minor masterpiece, turned up recently on television. SPYS, his latest film, may not represent the same level of achievement, but it cannot be dismissed as merely a routine vehicle for Sutherland and Gould.

It is an immensely entertaining film and the momentum

DONALD SUTHERLAND & ELLIOTT GOULD

of the humour is maintained throughout. Typically, Kershner pushes everything to extremes and his continuing concerns (mainly centering around the incredible powers of imagination) are once again very much in evidence. And visually it is perhaps his most sophisticated film, with marvellous photography by Gerry Fisher.

"Finely written espionage spoofery with the finesse of a classic Hollywood comedy. Very classy, very assured, with exactly the right degree of underlying blackness. SPYS takes post Watergate disillusionment as read, and goes on to out-do M*A*S*H, the film's humour moving with ease from the verbal to the visual to the situational and back. Sutherland and Gould counterpoint each other superbly (Sutherland in particular performing excellently, like a zanier Cary Grant). Kershner directs with utter skill, enabling even the most notoriously cameo-ridden actor to rise to unexpected heights."

Verina Glaessner/TIME OUT.

Pink Floyd Live At Pompeii

FEBRUARY 20 TO 22

Director: Adrian Mabel France/Belgium/W. Germany I973
Script: Adrian Maben. Photography: Gabor Pogany, Willy Kurant. With: Pink Floyd (David Gilmour, Roger Waters, Richard Wright, Nick Mason).
Colour. Certificate U. 85 minutes.

' Adrian Maben has chosen to film the Pink Floyd playing some of their finest numbers in the deserted amphitheatre at Pompeii, his purpose being to use the inherent drama of its physical and architectural environment to create an atmosphere which will complement the group's *musique concrete*. The electronic expertise of the group in their creation of sound is matched by a superb display of rhythmic editing, split-screen technique, fades, dissolves and process work used to enhance the music with dramatic imagery. Unfortunately, intercut with this, the film has a series of scenes of the group members discussing their work, eating and rehearsing in the studios, and these inserts do not lie particularly happily between the deliberately structured intensity of the rest. The interviews (all of which seem to have been added to the film for the English market), had they been conducted with any insight, might not have been totally irrelevant, but one senses a lack of penetration in the unheard questioning, confirmed by the one audible question: "Would you say you've made a lot of money with the Floyd?". The addition of the rehearsal scenes also suggests the necessity of padding the film to a commercial length. Having embarked on a difficult task to absorb each member of the audience in the director's personal visual concept - Maben weakens his position by breaking the audience's concentration. Left to the amphitheatre scenes alone, *Pink Floyd* could have taken a step towards liberating the structure of the rock film from the enforced discipline of documentary or narrative form. As it is, the film

remains a pleasing experience which suggests that the possibility of breaking away from a rigid format into the field of purely complementary imaginative imagery - normally only attempted in animation - might be the most successful way of recording the aural experience which rock provides.

Scott Meek/ MONTHLY FILM BULLETIN.

PLUS

Chariots Of The Gods

Director: Harald Reinl. West Germany 1969
Script: Harald Reinl; based on the books of Erich von Daniken. Photography: Ernst Wild, Claus Reidel, Richard R. Rimmel.
Cert. U. Colour. 56 mins. English Commentary.

"A film version of Erich von Daniken's provocative books about the possibility - Daniken would say the likelihood - that thousands of years ago the Earth was visited by extra-terrestrial intelligences. Put simply, Daniken's hypothesis is that God was an astronaut, and that old religious and mythological accounts of gods descending from the sky in fiery chariots are in fact references to real visitors from space whose superior intelligence caused them to be revered by the inhabitants of this planet. Like the books, the film assembles 'evidence' from the five continents, generally in the form of archaeological mysteries, and suggests that where the archaeologists have failed, modern science and particularly the knowledge we now have of space travel may be able to offer a solution."

DAVID WILSON / MONTHLY FILM BULLETIN.

Blood For Dracula

MARCH 5 TO 7

Director: Paul Morrissey Italy/France 1973
Script: Paul Morrissey. Photography: Luigi Kuveiller.
With: Udo Kier, Joe Dallessandro, Maxime McKendry, Milena Vukotic, Arno Juerging, Vittorio De Sica, Roman Polanski.
Colour. Certificate X. 99 minutes (cut from 103)

PLUS

Flesh For Frankenstein

Director: Paul Morrissey Italy/France 1973
Script: Paul Morrissey. Photography: Luigi Kuveiller.
With: Udo Kier, Joe Dallessandro, Monique Van Vooren, Arno Juerging, Carla Mancini, Srdjan Zelenovic.
Colour. Certificate X. 87 minutes (cut from 95)

JOE DALLESANDRO IS SEDUCED BY FRANKENSTEIN'S WIFE

UDO KIER AS COUNT DRACULA AND AS FRANKENSTEIN

Paired by virtue of production conditions (Italian/French co-productions; filmed back-to-back at Cinecitta), the two latest additions to Paul Morrissey's output illustrate a continuing drift away from the shadow of Warhol. Eccentric casting and some improvised dialogue remain, but there is a remarkable stylistic gulf between the parodic elements of LONESOME COWBOYS and those of this horror duo. Indeed, there are fewer points of stylistic cross-reference between BLOOD FOR DRACULA and FLESH FOR FRANKENSTEIN than might have been expected. In both there is a tenuous thematic balance between absurd humour and genuine horror, but whilst the more overtly campy FLESH FOR FRANKENSTEIN looks somewhat constrained by the demands of its original 3-D format, BLOOD FOR DRACULA opens out into a visual treat that recalls Visconti rather than Warhol.

Morrissey's proclaimed affection for the tattier end of the horror-movie market is indulged in the accentuation of melodrama, touches of gore-for-gore's-sake, and the pseudo-serious political equations of the Hitlerian Frankenstein and Joe Dallessandro's revolutionary gardner in BLOOD FOR DRACULA, but his achievement lies in drawing from his disparate actors such a fresh response to such essentially shopworn material. Udo Kier plays a suitably manic Frankenstein but manages to make of his Dracula a truly tragic figure, whilst BLOOD FOR DRACULA enjoys the added bonus of De Sica and Polanski in roles cut directly from their own cinematic preoccupations.

PAUL TAYLOR.

FILM CO~OP..?

With the thought that there must be many aspiring film directors in the Midlands, not to mention photographers, editors and scriptwriters, it seems to me that a Film Co-op could become a vital creative focus if it could be got off the ground. When it was attempted to get film-makers together four or five years ago things fell apart due to too much initial ideological discussion which didn't bear much relation to concrete possibilities, and the initial energies were dissipated.
With that experience in mind, I propose two meetings: the first for those who already have some practical experience of film or video, either professional or amateur, and a second meeting additionally open to anyone seriously interested in making films or writing scripts. The first meeting should establish what equipment, or access to equipment, might be available, and what expertise, contacts with the film world and filmic ideas already exist. With this core established, the second meeting can provide a further creative impetus of ideas, and deal with the all-important question of finance. After that, I hope the path will become self-generating.
So I hope to see any film-makers, past or present, at the first meeting at the Arts Lab on Sunday 25 January at 7.30 pm, and those seriously interested in making films at the second meeting on Sunday 8 February at 7.30.

SIMON BAILEY.

BIRMINGHAM FILM FESTIVAL 1976 MARCH 14~28

The annual Birmingham Film Festival is now becoming established as an essential contribution to a developing film culture in the West Midlands region. The need for such an event has perhaps never been greater, as an increasing number of important foreign films (even those by established directors) fail to find a British distributor. And it is only on special occasions such as the festival, when subsidy is available, that it becomes possible to import a large number of prints from abroad.

So there are sound practical reasons for having a festival, even on the modest scale of the Birmingham event. The question of film availability is of crucial importance, but so too is the need for a selection procedure which although allowing for a wide range of films to be shown, is also designed to further the work already being done by the Arts Lab and other similar organisations. The 1976 Birmingham Film Festival will consist of new or recent films selected from all the major film-producing countries. All the titles will be new to Birmingham and the majority will not have British distributors, so the festival screenings may be your only chance to see them. We intend to continue the trend started last year of concentrating on two or three countries whose cinema has suffered from particular neglect, and in 1976 there will be strong representation from Poland, France and at least one other country. We also intend to devote special sections to British independent cinema and animation.

One of the very basic aims of the festival is to bring the sort of film we programme regularly at the Lab to the attention of a wider public. This is partially achieved through the greater amount of publicity which the festival receives, but equally important we feel is the active involvement of other cinemas in the city.

At the time of going to press the only titles actually confirmed are the Polish films, but a separate programme booklet giving details of all films to be screened will be mailed to members and available to the public from the Lab and the ArtsShop. Because of the limited seating capacity at the Lab, and because each title will only receive one or two screenings, it will be essential to book in advance for the majority of films.

The Polish titles already confirmed are as follows: LAND OF PROMISE (Wajda), STORY OF SIN (Borowczyk), QUARTERLY BALANCE (Zanussi), BEHIND THE WALL (Zanussi), FAMILY LIFE (Zanussi), THE DELUGE (Hoffman), CRIMINAL RECORD (Trzos-Rastawiecki), FEAR (Kranze) and PEARL IN THE CROWN (Kutz).

Further details will be released shortly.

Peter Walsh.

ZANUSSI'S 'QUARTERLY BALANCE'

LAB NEWS

ARTS LAB TO MOVE?

Rumours must be pretty rife by now, what with mis-statements by the 'Birmingham Mail'. We feel it time to announce that the Arts Lab wants to move to larger, better, more accessible premises. Over the last year, Arts Lab staff have been seen mooching around warehouses in the backstreets off Broad Street, being wined and dined by property speculators eager to offload white elephants, and hassling with local planning regulations. Now we have been offered a site which we think we could use.

It's in Holt Street, corner of Lister Street, Aston, near the University and a stone's throw from Corporation Street. The plan we've put together gives us a bigger cinema, a second performance area for cinema, theatre and dance, studios galore plus room for a coffee-bar, lounge, and at long last, a bar. Don't get too excited yet, it's still very much at the planning stage and we still have to get over the minor detail of raising the necessary cash! (Anyone want to make a donation?)

More details will follow as the idea progresses. The move could be to the considerable advantage of the Arts Lab, the artists and you, the customers. We want to ensure that none of the character of the Lab is lost. This means we need your support, particularly at the time when the actual move takes place. Watch this space!

CAN YOU HELP?

The Lab simply can't operate without its voluntary helpers, so if you can spare a couple of hours now and then, why not lend a hand with BOX-OFFICE, COFFEE-BAR or PROJECTION? You can also help the Lab by taking our calendars, posters and other publicity material to your club, pub, school, college, office, factory, church, community centre or corner shop. If there's anything you can do contact Bob Nunn or Tony Jones, or ask at the Box-office.

ARTSSHOP

The Birmingham ArtsShop is an information and booking centre for all the main arts organisations in the city. It's conveniently situated in City Arcade (by C & A off Corporation St. - tel: 021-643-2514) and any Lab show can be booked there. The shop also sells a wide variety of craftwork, books, toys, prints and many other goods.

PRINTING

The ARTS LAB PRESS offers a complete Printing and Design service at below commercial rates. We can print up to A3 size (approximately 17" X 12") and specialize in display posters on our offset litho press. Phone John Keetley or Hunt Emerson for quotes. Silkscreen posters (usually 20" X 30") are also produced here - contact Ernie Hudson.

LAST WORD

A quick round-up of useful information for anyone still unaware of the delights of Tower Street:

ACCESS: The Lab is situated next to Birmingham Settlement, almost opposite 'The Barrel' pub. There is ample car-parking space in Tower Street, Lower Tower Street and Hospital Street, whilst the No. 5 bus from Hagley Road, Five Ways, Broad Street or City Centre will drop you almost at the door.

MEMBERSHIP & PRICES: The Lab is run on a members only basis but temporary membership is available for most events. With or without the temporary membership surcharge, prices compare very favourably with other city cinemas and theatres:
Members: 50p; Guests (1 per Member): 60p; Temporary Members: 75p.
Season Tickets, representing sizeable economies for regular patrons, are available to Members only. (R.O.A.R.)
Advance booking facilities are available at the Lab or at Birmingham ArtsShop, City Arcade.

BIRMINGHAM ARTS LABORATORY IS A REGISTERED CHARITY.
WE GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGE FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FROM WEST MIDLANDS ARTS, ARTS COUNCIL OF GREAT BRITAIN, & BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE.

FRONT COVER PHOTOS FROM JACK HAZAN'S 'A BIGGER SPLASH' LEFT: DAVID HOCKNEY; INSET TOP: HOCKNEY'S PAINTING 'PORTRAIT OF AN ARTIST'; INSET BOTTOM: CALIFORNIA BOYS.